

Rev 14:1-5 "The Lamb & the Church Triumphant" 10-25-15
In this chap we see the Lamb of God in contrast to the counterfeit lamb, the 2nd Beast in chap 13 who goes down in failure. We said that the # 666 falls short of the perfect & complete # 7. The fact it repeats 3 xs means that 3 members of this counterfeit trinity will fail: the dragon, the beast & the false \$- failure upon failure upon failure. But chap 14 opens w/ the Church, standing w/ the Lamb in total triumph & victory. These vss provide us w/ a vision of the Lamb & the Church Triumphant at the Last Day at the 2nd Coming of JX when the Lamb of God, the King of Kings & Lord of Lords, returns in great power & glory. That is what this is. & we will ask 3 questions:

1st Who is there? In v 1 we learn that the leading actors in this drama are already familiar to us. "Then I looked, & behold, on Mt Zion stood the Lamb, & w/ Him 144,000 who had His name & His Father's name written on their foreheads." This is a victory celebration. Notice the contrast betw the false prophet in chap 13 who disguises himself as a lamb w/ the intent to deceive. But this **Lamb** in v 1 is **The Lamb- The Lamb** of chap 5, who alone was worthy to open the scroll. The Lamb is also declared to be the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He is That Lamb, who by virtue of His death on the cross earned the right to take the scroll of destiny out of the hand of God the Father & open the 7 seals. So it is the Lamb of God who inaugurates the execution of God's eternal purposes for final judgment & salv. Judgment which includes the dragon, the 2 beasts & all who follow them.

Another contrast is that God had only permitted the dragon to have his sphere of influence of the fallen & cursed earth & sea. But here we see the Lamb standing on Mt Zion. Now, should we think of this is the literal Mt Zion on which the ancient city of Jerusalem was built? Remember this is Revelation, a book intentionally designed to convey its message by way of signs & symbols. John uses geographical locations in much the same way he uses numbers. Zion is mentioned over 150 times in the Bible.

We need to understand that Zion is not just the name of one geographical location on a map. Sometimes Zion refers to the geographical city of Jerusalem, sometimes it refers to Heaven, & sometimes it refers to the people of God themselves- depending on the context. The OT prophets used the name Zion to refer to the great city that God will establish & rule over at the end of the age for all eternity. Which of these is John referring to here in Rev 14? Not long ago we talked about the idea of the "already but not yet?" Our salvation has already been accomplished, but it is not yet consummated. Jesus has already won the victory over sin, but sin is not yet annihilated. God's judgment already has begun but it is not yet complete. What is in view here is the "not yet." Here in Rev 14:1, Mt Zion represents the consummation, the final home of R+. The New Heaven & the New Earth- the eternal existence of God's people who will live forever in the glorious presence of God the F,S, & HS. This is the place in which all of the prior OT images of Zion converge into one & escalate into something more wonderful than we can imagine.

One of the primary reasons we know this to be the case is because of who is present in this vision. Our attention is drawn to the 144,000. Who are these people? Some refer to them as a subset of the entire people of God, a super committed elite group of Xans, because in v 4 they are described as celibate group of males & first fruits to God & the Lamb. We will come back to that in a few minutes. But we have met the 144,000 before haven't we? Back in chap 7 they were introduced to us as 12,000 people from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. 12 times 12- 12 OT people of God times 12 NT people of God equal 144,000 multiplied by a thousand to show completeness. The total complement of the people of God. That is who this is – all the people of God from all ages.

Here in chap 14, at the consummation of all things, when all the fighting & hostilities have been brought to

their end once & for all, who stands w/ the name of the Lamb & the Father engraved upon their foreheads? The 144,000, the very same number sealed in chap 7. & this tells us that for all the assaults of the dragon & his 2 beasts, for all the centuries between the 1st & 2nd comings of JX, not a single one of God's people is lost. Not one of us. Jesus made this promise in Jn 6:37 "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, & whoever comes to Me I will never cast out." So who is there on the last day? You & I along w/ all the people of God from all ages.

The **2nd question is What are they doing?** This is not all they do, as we will see in coming weeks, but what are they doing here at the beginning of chap 14? Vss 2-3 "& I heard a voice from Heaven like the roar of many waters & like the sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps & they were singing a new song before the throne & before the 4 living creatures & before the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth." The 144,000, all the people of God from all the ages are singing praise to God. & we are told they are singing a new song. This is language drawn straight out of the OT. Ps 33 says, "Sing to the Lord a new song. Play skillfully & shout for joy." In Ps 40 David says, "He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God." "O sing unto the Lord a new song, for He has done wonderful things. His right hand & His holy arm have gained the victory for Him." But notice that only the 144,000 can learn the lyrics to this new song. What is the purpose of this secrecy? Not to keep God's glory veiled, but to symbolize the astounding truth that only those redeemed by the blood of the Lamb can sing this song of victory, because they are the only beneficiaries of that victory. This singing is expressed in 3 similes as we look for the word "like."

1st in V 2 "& I heard a voice from Heaven **like** the roar of many waters." Many years ago Dixie & I drove toward Niagra Falls we were amazed that we could hear the roar of the falling waters even when we were several miles away. There is always this inescapable roar of the sound of many waters. So the point is that this sound is pervasive – it is everywhere- & it conveys great power.

2nd, John says that this sound from Heaven was "like the sound of loud thunder." Much of the singing we read about in the Bk of Rev is characterized by great volume- it is explosively loud. Sometimes thunder can be pretty scary & awesome to hear. The point here is that this sound is awesome & loud in volume.

3rd, this sound from Heaven was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps. Now this is not a quiet contemplative plucking. In Bible days the sound of a harp was more like a guitar & in the OT it was particularly associated w/ a loud celebration, full of joy & gladness. This singing of the redeemed in Heaven is everywhere & it is powerful to the max. It is awesomely loud & it is totally full of joy. Why? On the one hand, because of the sheer size of the choir, but on the other hand because of their gratitude & supreme appreciation of what the Lamb of God has done for them: out of all the people of the Earth, Jesus redeemed them- He shed His precious blood for us.

Sometimes, in the here & now, we w/hold our praise to God but not on that day. Sometimes we "honor God with our lips, but our hearts are far from Him." Sometimes in the here & now our praise is only going thru the motions & is meaningless ritual & we are not truly worshipping God, but not on that day. **Who is there?** All of God's people from all ages.

What are they doing? Powerfully, awesomely, & joyfully praising the Lamb for His redemption.

The final & **3rd ?**: **How are they distinguished?** The people of God have 3 distinguishing features. **1st** v 4 tells us that these are virgins. In OT imagery the people of God are repeatedly referred to as the virgin daughter of Zion, the virgin Israel. But when Israel falls into idolatry, she is said to play the harlot. & in Rev 21 at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, the Church has been promised to X as a pure virgin, & on that day, we will be confirmed in R+ never to sin again & our relationship as the Bride of X will be consummated – We are remarkably the object of “the joy set before X” according to Heb 12:2. & we will become the bride of X w/o spot or wrinkle or any blemish. God tells us that the 144,000 are virgins, they have not committed spiritual adultery w/ the harlot of Babylon. To put it in a single sentence, these are the chosen people of God distinguished by their **covenant faithfulness** to our LJX.

2nd, they are distinguished by their **committed discipleship**. v 4b “these follow the Lamb wherever He goes.” This is the language of discipleship for Jesus says “Follow Me & I will make you to become fishers of men.” & “Whoever does not take up his cross & follow Me is not worthy of Me.” When Jesus says, “Follow Me,” He is not talking about going to the same geographical locations that He goes to. Note also that in the 1st cent, a cross was not a beautiful piece of jewelry, it was a symbol of violent death. Jesus is saying that His people will suffer as He did when they die to self & seek to love & trust & obey Him. We are called to follow our LJ & seek 1st His kingdom & His R+ at every turn of our lives. So as part of the 144,000 we are distinguished by our committed discipleship.

3rd, they are distinguished by their **consecrated ministry**. V 4c “These have been redeemed from mankind as 1st fruits for God & the Lamb.” From the OT we know that the 1st fruits were the 1st part of the harvest & were devoted to God. Of course, 1st fruits were the anticipation

of a larger harvest to come & that is what the remainder of chap 14 is all about - but we will see the rest of the harvest goes into the winepress of God's wrath. So the people of God, the 144,000 have been purchased out of the greater group of mankind for God & for the Lamb as 1st fruits. That is, uniquely set apart for God, consecrated to God. To what end? It is implied in what further describes them in v 5: "& in their mouth no lie was found, for they were blameless." As we have already seen in chaps 12 & 13, Satan & the 2 beasts are all about lying. Deception is their mode of operation. In contrast, John tells us here that "in their mouth no lie was found, for they were blameless." Does this mean that these people have lived some kind of sinless life on earth? No way, this can only mean that these who have been bought with the precious blood of Jesus have been cleansed from all their sins & these former lying sinners are now enabled to speak the truth & by God's grace remain faithful to God. & John reminds us that we are blameless before the Father because we are clothed in the perfect R+ of JX & we are no longer even able to sin. We will be confirmed in R+ in Heaven never to sin again!

Who is there? All of God's people in all ages.

What are they doing? Singing God's praise.

How are they distinguished? While in this life, they were marked out by their **covenant faithfulness**, their **committed discipleship** & **consecrated ministry**.

Why is this here? So that we will see the glorious destiny to which we are headed. The reward for all the blood, sweat & tears we face in this life is the precious gift of endurance to face all the attacks of the dragon, the Beast & the false prophet. Here we are, the Church Triumphant. This compels us to be self-sacrificing in faithfulness in this present life because of our settled

assurance in God's promises concerning the next life. & may we never forget that the model is our LJX Himself. So we follow the Lamb wherever He goes. May God grant us this gr. Amen.

Bened: Now unto Him who is able to keep us from falling, & to make us stand in the presence of His glory blameless w/ great joy, to the only wise God our Sav, be gl, maj, dominion & power, both now & forevermore. Amen.